

**TESTIMONY TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE ON
H. B. NO. 6391, AN ACT CONCERNING THE PRACTICE OF
ADVANCED PRACTICE REGISTERED NURSES
PUBLIC HEARING MARCH 20, 2013**

Good day. My name is Lisabeth Johnston and I am submitting testimony as I will be away from Connecticut at the time of the public hearing. I am an advanced practice psychiatric nurse (APRN) , have a PhD in nursing, a master's degree in psychiatric nursing, a bachelor's degree in nursing and even a diploma in nursing. I am certified by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), renew my certification to practice every five years with 150 hours of continuing education credits and am licensed by this State as an APRN.

Psychiatric mental health APRNs have now worked for twenty years to persuade the Connecticut legislature that we are capable of providing prescribing services to patients without the physician oversight that State law requires . The current APRN prescribing law is an anachronism. We already practice independently but must continue to meet the requirement for periodic mandatory "collaboration". APRN oversight is already present in the form of rigorous professional credentialing, State licensure, and the presence and availability to patients and others of the State Board of Nurse Examiners.

The law as it stands impedes direct patient access to APRNs for the mental health services so badly needed in Connecticut. It discourages opening an APRN practice in Connecticut when the nurse can move a practice to a neighboring state and practice without the requirement that infantilizes our profession and insults our education and expertise.

I have been practicing psychiatric nursing for almost 50 years and have had a solo practice in West Hartford since 1987, full time since 1998. I have been prescribing medications since 1988 based on my assessment of patients' mental and physical status at initial session and thereafter. I treat adult patients across the range of psychiatric diagnoses utilizing my education and experience and I practice within the scope and standards of psychiatric advanced nursing practice as delineated by the American Nurses Association, The American Psychiatric Nurses Association and the International Society of Psychiatric Nurses. My education at every level has provided me with depth of knowledge of neurobiology, physiology, clinical assessment, pharmacology, psychopharmacology as well as normal psychology and psychopathology. It has provided me with the understanding of when to reach out for consultation and to always collaborate with other providers in the interest of excellence in patient care.

Despite the above, I am ordered by State law to be supervised (1988-1999) by a physician and then to "collaborate" with a physician (1999-present) for my prescribing practice. I am forced to find a willing physician, (not always an easy task unless the APRN is willing to work for the physician or

physician group), enter into a business arrangement with same, agree to a fee for the service the physician provides, and take three or more hours out of practice at the physician's pleasure in order to meet. I thereby comply with Connecticut law requiring mandatory collaboration with a member of another profession, which is not collaboration at all by virtue of its mandatory requirement.

The ANCC has credentialed me, and all psychiatric clinical nurse specialists and nurse practitioners who meet its requirements, to practice according to our full scope of practice which includes diagnosing and treating patients including prescribing. It does that because the data have clearly and repeatedly demonstrated that our education has prepared us to be knowledgeable, skilled and safe practitioners who understand the importance and depth of clinical judgment required to diagnose and treat vulnerable people.

And so, for all these reasons, I am addressing the Committee again this year and asking again that this Committee vote to strike from the Connecticut nursing statute this archaic mandatory collaboration language.

Thank you for your consideration.